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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9698
INFO RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6685
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6894
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0903
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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 5002

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SUBJECT: THEFTS OF BAGGAGE AT BUENOS AIRES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Refs: BUENOS AIRES 2149

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador recently informed Argentina's Foreign Minister Taiana and Interior Minister Fernandez that the Embassy would be updating its Consular Information Sheet to include a warning to U.S. travelers about thefts at Argentina's Ezeiza International Airport.

¶2. (SBU) On October 24, Ambassador told Interior Minister Anibal Fernandez that given the recent arrests and declarations by airport security authorities about organized thefts of goods from travelers' luggage at Buenos Aires' main international airport, the USG has a legal responsibility to warn U.S. travelers of this danger. Ambassador noted that the Embassy had already discussed the matter directly with the head of the airport security police (reftel). Minister Fernandez said he fully understood the Ambassador's message and acknowledged that thefts at the airport by employees were a serious problem which GOA authorities were working hard to address. The Minister said that he was determined to improve both security and convenience at the airport and recounted that just two days previously he had convened a meeting of all relevant authorities to review efforts to make improvements.

¶3. (SBU) On October 26, Ambassador also raised the issue of thefts from airport baggage with Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, who was accompanied by U/S for bilateral affairs Vicente Espeche Gil. Ambassador again explained that given the recent highly-publicized cases of thefts from travelers' baggage at Ezeiza airport, arrests of employees, and public statements by airport security officials about the problem, the USG needed to inform U.S. citizen travelers via our Consular Information System. The Ambassador noted that we would seek to be factual, not alarmist. The Minister and U/S said they understood the U.S. legal need to act. They asked that we give them a head's-up before the new information appears in order that they could help manage any reactions. (Last time the USG issued a new Consular Information Sheet, the Argentine President reacted angrily and told the Minister to call the Ambassador in to receive a protest.) They also asked that we take another look at language on the Tri-border area, which they said they felt exaggerated the dangers to U.S. travelers to Argentina. The Ambassador agreed to look at the language and keep the MFA North America desk informed as we prepare a new Information Sheet.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy subsequently updated the Consular Information Sheet and will be submitting it to the Department. We believe the MFA will work with us to avoid any untoward reaction from senior

levels of the GOA, and ask that Washington coordinate closely with Embassy on the timing of the release so we can keep the MFA informed.

WAYNE